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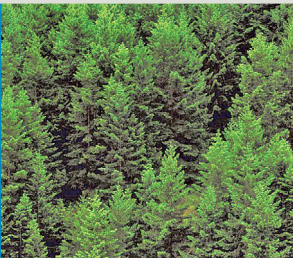


BEAUTY
at the Bay

New director and CEO for National Gallery of Canada announced

Marc Mayer has been named the National Gallery of Canada's new director and CEO effective Jan. 19, 2009. Following a competitive search across North America and abroad, the gallery's search committee selected Mayer, who comes from the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, to succeed Pierre Théberge. **METRO OTTAWA**

Ottawa



NCC plans to plant evergreens

To lighten the environmental footprint this holiday season, the National Capital Commission has cancelled its paper card and poinsettia distribution and is instead directing the funds to an environmentally sustainable tree-planting initiative. Over the next few years, the NCC will plant evergreens in Gatineau and adjacent to NCC pathways near the Central Experimental Farm.

METRO OTTAWA

Traffic moves along despite snow

TRACEY TONG
tracey.tong@metronews.ca



If you thought the commute was rough yesterday, chances are that conditions this morning didn't make you any happier.

The area's most recent snowfall, which started early yesterday morning and will have "affected three rush hours" could leave as much as 30 centimetres of snow by the time the snow tapers off late this morning, said Environment Canada warning preparedness meteorologist Geoff Coulson.

This — in addition to freezing rain last night, an increased numbers of cars on the road from the transit strike, and the partial clo-



Morning traffic slowed a crawl downtown yesterday as work crews dealt with a dump of snow.

sure of the Chaudière Bridge — likely made for a nasty morning commute.

"It's a significant storm system," said Coulson.

On the bright side, things

should improve by 10 a.m. today, he said.

"We should start seeing notable improvement in visibility," he said.

In terms of totals, Ottawa

could see up to 30 centimetres by the time the storm finishes.

Surprisingly, police didn't report a lot of collisions yesterday. From 6 to 11 a.m.,

there were 35 minor collisions on city streets, said Ottawa Police Constable J.P. Vincelette.

"There was nothing major — traffic was moving very slowly on city streets," he said. "I think the population of drivers still remember last winter."

Over in Gatineau, police responded to 12 collisions before noon, said Const. Isabelle Poirier.

Coulson is forecasting slightly warmer temperatures later this week before temperatures plummet again for the start of the workweek.

"It almost looks like a see-saw over the next two weeks, with really wild swings in temperatures," he said.

Chaudière Bridge set to reopen

TRAFFIC The Chaudière Bridge will be partially reopened to passenger cars and pedestrians at 7 a.m. today. Based on recent engineering analyses and recommendations, it was determined that two lanes will be opened, one for each direction. Signs will be installed at both entrances to direct traffic flow, and the speed limit has been reduced to 40 km/h.

TRACEY TONG/METRO OTTAWA

Car break-ins on the rise, police say

CRIME Following a rash of vehicle break-ins in the downtown core, Ottawa police are asking people to be vigilant.

In the last few weeks, about 50 thefts from vehicles targeting GPS units, laptops, satellite radio receivers and iPods have been reported primarily in Centretown, Rideau Street and the ByWard Market.

METRO OTTAWA

Donor gives \$1 million to two local homework clubs

UNITED WAY Disadvantaged children will get homework help after the United Way/Centraide Ottawa announced a \$1-million gift to enhance two Ottawa homework clubs yesterday afternoon.

Stephen Greenberg and his family have donated \$1 million over 10 years to expand the after-school homework clubs in Banff Avenue and Confederation Court Community Houses.

The clubs are designed to better position 50 children each year to reach

their full potential.

The announcement also marks a new kind of giving for United Way, which provides donors an opportunity to become more directly involved in developing community solutions.

"It's a powerful opportunity for a special kind of donor — whether you call this venture philanthropy, social entrepreneurship or strategic giving," said Michael Allen, president and CEO of United Way/Centraide Ottawa.

TRACEY TONG/METRO OTTAWA

O'Brien disappointed in council

TIM WIECLAWSKI
tim.wieclawski@metronews.ca



DEBATES An omnibus motion that set a 4.9 per cent property-tax increase and brought an end to six days of budget debates robbed the city of a much-needed discussion on how to restrain city spending, said Mayor Larry O'Brien.

"I'm not happy in any way with a 4.9 per cent tax increase for the citizens of Ottawa," he said yesterday.

"This is disappointing that council decided not to do its full work."

Even though O'Brien was advocating for a line-by-line consideration of the budget, he said he did not feel ganged-up on when deliberations were brought to an abrupt halt on Monday

night, after a group of councillors passed an omnibus motion resolving the budget with one vote.

"I think what happened was, at the very last minute people saw the road map was going to force them to make some tough decisions, put their positions out on some tough issues, and they didn't want to do that," O'Brien said. "I think that's the role of municipal government — to take that step and make those tough choices."

O'Brien would not predict how much lower the property-tax increase could have been, but said he is confident it would have been reduced.

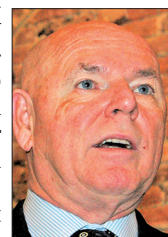
In a memo to councillors

sent yesterday, O'Brien warned, "This budget will catch up to us next year. It is unsustainable for tough economic times ahead and difficult for the taxpayers of Ottawa to grasp."

Alta Vista Ward Coun. Peter Hume said this budget puts them on solid financial footing and the city will save around \$20 million next year.

"We are close to balancing our reserve funds. We protected the childcare spaces and the arts funding, funding for outdoor rinks and supportive housing was a big winner," said Hume.

"So there were significant gains in that regard."



Larry O'Brien

News in brief

TRANSIT The provincial government said it would not step in to avert Ottawa's transit

strike like it did earlier this year in Toronto.

METRO OTTAWA





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On average, 390 children under the age of 14 die every year from preventable injuries and 25,500 are hospitalized, according to Safe Kids Canada, a national child-injury prevention organization linked with the Hospital for Sick Children. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

Canada



Mounties to test Tasers

The RCMP said they would test 24 Tasers bought before 2006 after a media investigation suggested older models of the stun gun could fire excessively large electrical charges. Last week, CBC aired an investigation into 44 X-26 units, left, used by U.S. agencies and said independent tests showed four of them fired charges up to 60 per cent greater than the supposed maximum. All four were made before 2005. **REUTERS**

News in brief

ONTARIO In the supermarket and even out for a stroll, Premier Dalton McGuinty was pestered over the furor his government created with a plan to limit teen drivers to having no more than one teen passenger. That's why he gave in earlier this week and scrapped the move that was part of changes aimed at making Ontario roads safer for teens, who have higher accident rates.

SURPLUS Despite a slump in world oil prices, the Newfoundland and Labrador government said yesterday it expects to finish

ish the fiscal year with more than \$1 billion in its pocket, CBC News Online reports. Finance Minister Jerome Kennedy, however, laid out a set of dire warnings to accompany a fiscal update that projects a \$1.27-billion surplus for the current operating year.

HALIFAX City officials have determined that questions about bestiality and suicide are acceptable to ask potential police officers during a polygraph test. But have police administer the tests constitutes a conflict of interest. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Welfare rates not meeting basic needs, report says

Welfare incomes in Canada are increasingly inadequate to meet basic needs, according to a report to be released today in Toronto, with Ontario seeing the sharpest loss over the past two decades.

In 2007-dollar terms in Ontario, between 1992 and 2007, a lone parent's welfare declined by almost \$5,500 (from \$21,931) and a couple with two children saw a loss of almost \$8,150 (from \$29,207), says the report.

"When we do not grant even the basics needed for survival, how then can we honestly criticize the recipients of such assistance for

lack of effort or decry behaviours that offer relief from such a miserable existence?" says the National Council of Welfare report.

Payouts for most of Canada's 1.7 million adults and children on welfare have dropped dramatically over the past 20 years and fall well below the poverty line, says the report, which looked at provincial and federal assistance for those on welfare from 1986 to 2007.

The report shows the biggest loss in welfare incomes was in Ontario in 1995 under the Mike Harris Conservative government when welfare for able-bodied people was cut by 21.6 per cent and frozen for everyone for the next nine years. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

Ottawa Rae drops out



Bob Rae and wife Arlene make their way through the snow to a news conference yesterday where Rae withdrew from the Liberal leadership race.

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Most Wanted fugitive nabbed

CALGARY A convicted child molester of America's Most Wanted television notoriety has been arrested in Calgary.

Police received a tip from U.S. marshalls and yesterday arrested 49-year-old Steven Andrew Hayes on a downtown construction site. **METRO CANADA**

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Ukraine's pro-Western governing coalition, rooted in the 2004 Orange Revolution, was reinstated yesterday after months of deadlock with Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko likely to remain in her job. **REUTERS**

World



Bush wants Mugabe to step down

The African Union rejected tougher action against Zimbabwe yesterday and said only dialogue could solve the deepening crisis, while U.S. President George W. Bush joined calls for President Robert Mugabe, left, to step down. Zimbabwe's government accuses Western powers of exploiting a cholera epidemic that has killed nearly 600 to try to bring down the veteran leader.

REUTERS

News in brief

PAKISTAN U.S. President George W. Bush said yesterday the United States has made it clear to Pakistan that it will do whatever is necessary to protect American soldiers and civilians.

ARREST Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich was arrested yesterday on corruption charges, including that he tried to sell the U.S. Senate seat vacated by fellow Democrat and president-elect Barack Obama. **REUTERS**

Greek rioters target parliament

Riot police battled protesters outside Greece's parliament and in Athens suburbs yesterday, while opposition socialists called

for the conservative government to quit in order to end the worst civil unrest in decades.

Rows of riot police

squared off with demonstrators for more than an hour outside the parliament building before firing tear gas to disperse the crowd in fresh violence triggered by the shooting of a 15-year-old boy by police.

Bands of young protesters regrouped and threw stones at police, chanting: "Let parliament burn!"

On the fourth day of violence, protests spread to the Athens suburbs after the funeral of the boy, Alexandros Grigoropoulos, whose killing on Saturday triggered Greece's worst riots in decades, fanned by discontent over government and a slowing economy.

More than 5,000 people clad in black gathered at the cemetery, many chanting: "Cops, Pigs, Murderers!"

Emergency talks

- Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis, whose New Democracy party has a one-seat majority, held emergency talks with the president and opposition leaders to urge them to close ranks against the rioters.

As the boy's flower-covered white coffin was being buried, protesters clashed with police outside and one officer fired shots in the air to disperse an angry crowd.

His killing touched a raw nerve among young Greeks, outraged at years of political scandals and rising levels of poverty and unemployment, worsened by the global economic downturn.

REUTERS

Women happier sex: poll

STUDY Men are happier with money, while women find greater joy in friendships and relationships with their children, co-workers and bosses, a new global survey reveals.

The online survey of 28,153 people in more than 51 countries by global marketing and information firm Nielsen found that as the world grapples with a recession and financial markets remain volatile, many people are reminding themselves that money can't buy

happiness.

The Nielsen happiness study found that globally, women are happier than men in 48 of the 51 countries surveyed in April 2008, and only in Brazil, South Africa and Vietnam were men found to be happier than women.

"Because they are happier with non-economic factors, women's happiness is more recession-proof," Nielsen vice-president of consumer research Bruce Paul said in a statement. **REUTERS**

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Comment & Views

Let's retire the Queen

The WestView

Paul Sullivan

Journalist & media consultant

With apologies to Paul McCartney ... Her Majesty's a pretty nice girl, but why is she running my country?

As I've watched the remarkable events of the past week unfold, the most remarkable was the spectacle of Stephen Harper, hat in hand, tugging his forelock in the general direction of Michaëlle Jean, Mrs. Windsor's representative in Ottawa.

You're familiar with Mrs. Windsor? That nice old lady in London with the corgis and the celebrity grandchildren? Her Majesty?

There hasn't been a lot of talk about the suitability of that exchange; I guess because most of us are relieved that Ms. Jean, a former Radio-Canada reporter with not one iota of experience in governance, just granted the prime minister's wish, and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition doesn't get to run the country, at least not yet.

But why do Mrs. Windsor and her envoy still run the country? Until last week, they have been little more than glorified lawn ornaments. Inviting them to your charity garden party adds instant class. But what if Ms. Jean, who probably doesn't like Mr. Harper any more than Mr. Harper likes her, had decided to give the reins of power to Stéphane Dion and the balance of power to Chief Blothead Gilles Duceppe?

For one thing, we'd hear a lot more squawking about how it's time to end this out-

Here's what we need to do: Immediately, as a nation, we need to grow up.

dated, ridiculous subservience to Prince Charles' Mom. Instead, a grateful nation has decided to put aside any qualms about Ms. Jean, her former French citizenship, her rumoured separatist leanings, her absurd appointment as the Queen's representative, never mind the innate, fundamental absurdity of the Queen herself.

So what happens in January if Her Majesty's Loyal Etc. try to stick it to Stephen one more time? Back he goes, gripping his forelock, to visit Ms. Jean, and she informs him that "we are not amused," and turns the government over to Michael or Rae and their little dog Jack? She can do that! She's Mrs.

Windsor's envoy. Mrs. Windsor runs the country!

I simply can't believe we're still letting this happen. Here's what we need to do: Immediately, as a nation, we should grow up.

Then, we should send Ms. Jean back to Radio-Canada, tell Mrs. Windsor that it's time to retire as the Queen of Canada, thanks for the memories. Then we elect a president at large (as everyone mistakenly believes they vote for the prime minister anyway), while preserving the parliamentary democracy that we've come to know and love.

We do this through proportional representation, so we get the parties and the policies we want exactly in proportion to the popular vote. Now that's democracy.

And God Save Mrs. Windsor for another day.

Paul Sullivan is a Vancouver-based journalist and owner of Sullivan Media Consulting.



MICHAEL DE ADOR

Word on the street: What's the best holiday gift you've ever received?

Valerie Nolet

age 21, Ottawa

A: My car. I got it from my parents. They paid for half and I paid for the other half of it.



Remi Roy

age 24, Ottawa

A: I received a goalie mask when I played Peewee AA hockey. It had panther decals on each side ... I was 10 or 11 years old.



Sophia Fairweather

age 22, Ottawa

A: The best gift is that all my family is going to be home for Christmas.



Summer Hodder

age 28, Toronto

A: I got a handmade book of memories, quotes and photos that I otherwise wouldn't have had.



Letters

A strike for the holidays

I think it is a disgrace that OC Transpo and the City of Ottawa are unable to settle this dispute.

At this time of year when the city is bustling with people hurrying to and from work, getting Christmas shopping done and visiting friends and family, it is frightening to think of losing a primary means of transportation. I have no car, no licence, and no way of walking to work. I bought a bus pass, and regardless of OC Transpo's intention of offering a discount next month, I am frustrated at having spent \$80 only to

be stranded. I only hope we see an improvement in service — that is, until the next threat to strike.

JENNIFER COUPER, OTTAWA

One less client for OC Transpo

I think it is shameful that the OC Transpo union wants to hold its clients ransom for more money. It already has one of the most competitive compensation packages in the province; not only compared to other bus drivers but also to people in other sectors. Shame on you OC Transpo. This is a client you will not see back after the strike.

JOHN THULA, HULL

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Letters must include sender's full name, address and phone number — street name and phone numbers will NOT be published. We reserve the right to edit letters.

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8

ONGC grudgingly bids on Imperial
Oil and Natural Gas Corp. bid reluctantly on Imperial Energy yesterday. Rumours swirled that ONGC wanted to renegotiate after crude prices crashed. **REUTERS**

Business

EDITOR: FERMIN DESOUSA, FERMIN.DESOUSA@METRONEWS.CA

TSX slides on rate cut

Toronto's main stock index fell yesterday as the Bank of Canada's acknowledgment that the country is entering a recession hit heavily weighted financial shares, while lower oil prices weighed on some energy stocks.

The comments managed to sideswipe shares of banks and insurers given their close link to the economy, which sent the financial index down 5.34 per cent and stripped it of all the gains recorded in the previous session.

"All this talk about a recession really affects sentiment for the banks and fi-

nancials because they are heavily exposed to the economy," said Elvis Picardo, analyst and strategist at Global Securities in Vancouver. "And it's been frustrating for investors that the markets are simply unable to put together a string of successive advances."

The slide followed the market's 450-point rally Monday and extended a pattern that has been firmly in place for months, where big gains are almost always followed by triple-digit losses.

The S&P/TSX composite index closed down 169.56

points, or 1.98 per cent, at 8,397.56, with eight of its 10 sectors ending lower.

REUTERS

Historic rate cut

- The central bank cut its interest rate more aggressively than most economists had expected, bringing it to its lowest level since 1958 and declaring for the first time that the economy is in recession. It lowered the overnight target rate by three-quarters of a percentage point to 1.5 per cent, due to a "broader and deeper" global downturn than previously anticipated.

Downturn expected to flatten telecom profit

Profits for the telecom industry will become flatter in the face of a worsening economy and new competition in the wireless market, according to a forecast yesterday by the Conference Board of Canada.

The outlook forecast annual combined profits of about \$7 billion between 2008 and 2011.

The board had calculated that industry profits for 2006 and 2007 were \$5.6 billion and \$6.5 billion, respectively.

At the forefront of the industry's woes is the collapse of the BCE buyout, the biggest leveraged buyout in the world, which was derailed after KPMG said the deal would leave BCE insolvent.

Though demand for wireless services is driving growth, "profit levels will remain flat over the next few years, due to fierce price competition, and a slowdown in demand growth due to the economic slowdown."

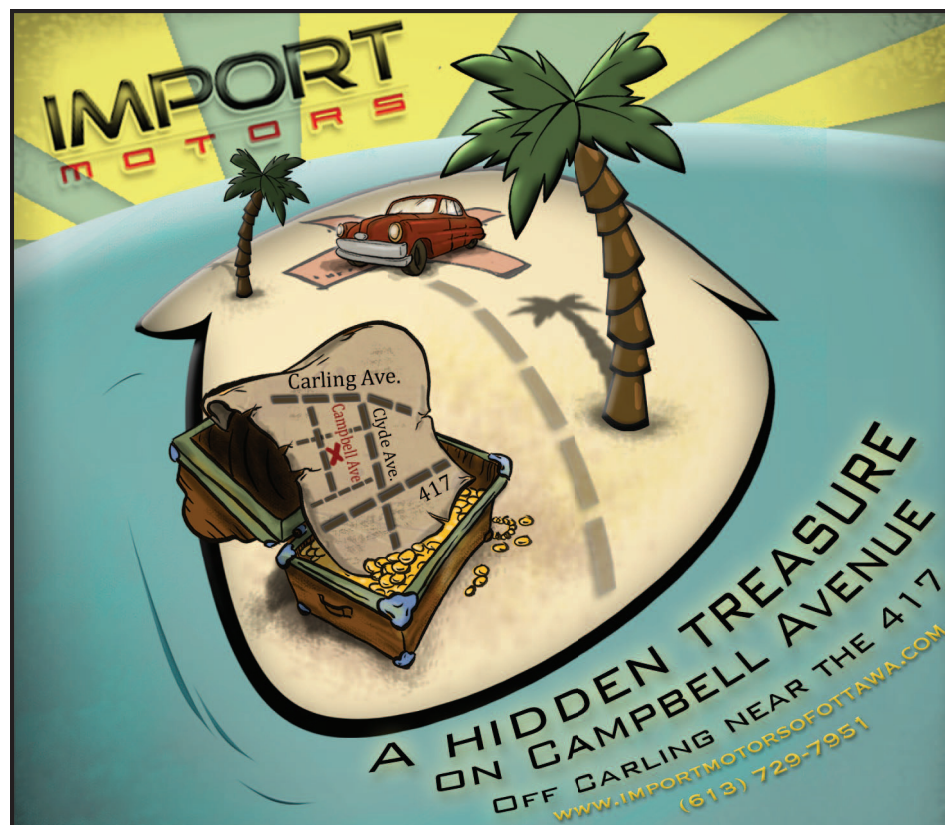
REUTERS

In brief

AUTOS An agreement on a U.S. aid package — negotiated to include \$15 billion US for Ford, General Motors and Chrysler — for the auto sector would turn up the heat on Canada to bring forward its own support plan, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty said yesterday.

JOB CUTS Bombardier Recreational Products, the maker of the Ski-Doo and Sea-Doo and private company that was spun off of Bombardier Inc., said it would cut nearly 1,000 jobs and slash production by 20 per cent worldwide because of the global economic slump.

REUTERS



Recession hits NFL

The NFL announced yesterday that it is cutting more than 10 per cent of its staff in response to the downturn in the U.S. economy. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

9

Sports

SPORTS@METRONews.CA

Boyle glad to escape Lightning nightmare

MATTHEW WUEST
matthew.wuest@metronews.ca

Dan Boyle can't hide the hint of satisfaction he gets out of seeing the Tampa Bay Lightning in the NHL basement.

"I'm only human, right?" Boyle joked. "But to see what has happened out there, it's probably more sad than anything for me because I still think it's a great place to play and it's very unfortunate all this stuff is going on."

The 32-year-old defenceman didn't realize it at the time, but the Lightning gave him the equivalent of a get-out-of-jail free card when it kicked him to the curb in July after new owners Oren Koules and Len Barrie took over.

Boyle, who was asked to waive the no-trade clause before the ink had dried on his new six-year contract, ended up being dealt to the San Jose Sharks. While the



Ottawa native Dan Boyle is currently second among NHL defencemen in scoring with 24 points.

Koules-Barrie overhaul has Tampa Bay (6-13-8) stumbling in controversy and incompetence, Boyle and the Sharks (22-3-2) are the NHL's best team.

"I was planning to be (in Tampa Bay) for a while, but having seen the way some guys have been treated there and what's gone on so far, and on top of that, how I've been treated here, I have no regrets whatsoever," Boyle said.

er," Boyle said.

The 5-foot-11, 190-pounder from Ottawa has put the Lightning debacle behind him, not to mention a serious wrist injury that sidelined him for half of last season.

Boyle, who is second among NHL blue-liners with 10 goals and 14 assists for 24 points in 25 games, is hearing whispers he could be a Norris Trophy candidate if he keeps it up.

Although Boyle won a Stanley Cup with the Lightning in 2004, he calls the Sharks the "best team I've been on." But he is also aware the Sharks have been perennial underachievers in the post-season and wants to help erase that label.

"Playoff hockey, as we all know, is totally different," Boyle said. "We had a pretty good team in '04. We stepped it up to the next level in the playoffs. Until we get there, until we do that with the Sharks, it remains to be seen."

Melrose lets fly on Lightning

NHL While a guest on the Toronto's FAN 590 radio station yesterday, ex-Tampa Bay Lightning coach Barry Melrose sounded off on his former club, saying that during his short tenure he dealt with constant interference from people in the organization.

"I had guys in Tampa who wanted to run the team and I wouldn't let them. I was

"I hope Tampa Bay doesn't win a game in the next year."

Barry Melrose

hired to coach and I coached," Melrose said. "Every day was a constant battle." Melrose was fired less than a month ago, only 16 games into the season. In the 11 games they have played since, Tampa Bay has only won once. When asked if that made him happy, he said, "Yeah it does ... I hope Tampa Bay doesn't win a game in the next year."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Petitclerc takes Lou Marsh

After winning five gold medals at the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games, wheelchair racer Chantal Petitclerc has today been awarded the Lou Marsh Trophy as Canada's top athlete this year.

A panel made up of sports journalists and luminaries from around the country judges the award, named for the former Toronto Star sports editor.

Competing at Beijing in the T54 class for athletes with different levels of spinal cord injuries and amputations, she won the 200- and 800-metre races within

90 minutes of each other, setting two world records.

She also won the 400 in record time and the 100 before finishing up in the 1,500 with a win by more than one second over her closest rival.

Overall, Petitclerc won 14 golds and 21 total medals over five Olympic games. She holds four world records and adds the Lou Marsh to her many other honours, including Maclean's magazine's Canadian of the Year in 2004. Petitclerc joins Rick Hansen as one of two wheelchair athletes to win the Lou Marsh Trophy. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

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Automotive

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More Zoom Zoom for Mazda3

Megaseller's feisty spirit alive and well in revamped model

JIM ROBINSON
for Metro Canada



Imagine you're in the shoes of Yoshiyuki Meada. He's the program manager for the 2010 Mazda3 and his job is to fix something that isn't broken.

One of every three Mazda vehicles sold around the world is a Mazda3. In Canada, the Mazda3 has improved in sales every year since it was introduced in 2003. In fact, 2008 will set another sales record, with people lining up to get a little Zoom Zoom in their lives.

What Meada did was take the overall Mazda3 design concept and keep what was working and refine the rest.

To get everyone on board, he insisted on designers and engineers from Mazda's styling centres visiting each other's countries to talk about the car and learn what consumers in different parts of the world were thinking. His idea was to instill what Mazda calls "the emotion of motion."

Although the 2010 and the current Mazda3 have virtually the same dimensions, much attention was paid to aerodynamics with things like panels under the body to smooth air flow with the car's overall coefficient of drag going from 0.31 down to 0.29.

The biggest visual change is the much-enlarged grille. While it retains the Mazda five-point



The 2010 Mazda3 sees a host of changes designed to improve on the outgoing model that was one of the most successful cars in the history of the company.

design, the wide mouth is there, not just for improved cooling, but is an

actual part of the aero package.

The cabin area underwent not just a major redesign with liberal use of soft-touch materials, but the switch to what Mazda calls a Zone Layout.

Instrumentation is placed in zones of importance based on eye movement, the primary ones being the large tachometre on the left and speedometer on the right in pods directly in the line of sight of the driver.

Housed in a second zone is a Multi Information Display (MID) on the centre of the dash and raised 100 mm higher and to the right of the main gauges. Positioned here, it is still in the line of sight.

Depending on the model and options, it shows fuel consumption, distance and even a 3.5-inch colour navigation screen.

The four-door sedan tested here will arrive in the early spring along with a five-door Sportback hatch in three levels of trim: GX,

GS and GT.

The 2.0-litre, DOHC inline four-cylinder engine that helped Mazda3 sales take off in 2008 is offered on the GX and GS. It produces 148 hp and 135 lb/ft of torque and comes with as standard five-speed automatic transmission or optional five-speed automatic driving the front

2010 Mazda3

Type: Compact sedan

Price: Not available

Engine: 2.0-litre DOHC inline four-cylinder; 2.5-litre DOHC inline four-cylinder

HP: 148-167

Highlights

- Front-wheel drive
- Fuel-efficient
- Aerodynamic

wheels.

Fuel consumption numbers for the 2.0-litre manual and automatic are 8.1/5.9L/100 km city/highway and 8.6L/5.9L/100 km city/highway respectively.

Pricing will not be announced until early in January but it should be pretty much the same at the 2009, with the base car starting around \$17,000.

While my time with this car was brief, there's little doubt the Zoom Zoom spirit is alive and well in the 2010 Mazda3.



The interior of the 2010 Mazda3 is much changed, including a second-tier Multi Information Display (MID) at the top of the centre stack.

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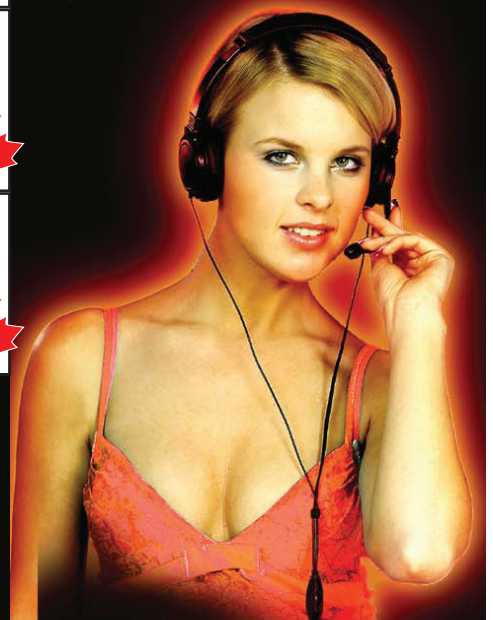
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Travel



Advantage files for bankruptcy

Car-rental chain Advantage Rent-A-Car Inc. has filed for bankruptcy protection and closed about 40 per cent of its U.S. retail locations, citing a decline in the travel industry as customers cut their travel and discretionary spending. The company said it laid off 440 workers, or almost half its workforce. Advantage said it will continue operating at its remaining locations during the bankruptcy, and is exploring strategic alternatives, including a possible sale or merger. **REUTERS**

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10 ugly buildings and monuments

1 Boston City Hall, Boston: While it was hip for its time, this concrete structure is now criticized for its dreary facade and incongruity with the rest of the city's more genteel architecture.

2 Montparnasse Tower, Paris: Its detractors admit that there is one very good reason to take in the view from the building's observation deck: It's the only place you can see the city without it.

3 LuckyShoe Monument, Tuuri, Finland: It may be over-the-top, but the giant, golden horseshoe that looms over Finland's second-largest shopping mall is said to bring good luck.

4 Metropolitan Cathedral, Liverpool, England: The people who

work here must be sick of the space-capsule jokes. Even those who find the building's shell "spacey" have to admit the circular interior is spectacular.

5 Port Authority Bus Terminal, New York City: Those who pass by this iron monstrosity might be tempted to ask about a completion date, but alas, this is the finished product.

6 Torres de Colon, Madrid: These matching towers are also known as El Enchufe or The Plug for the plug-like structure that holds them together.

7 Liechtenstein Museum of Fine Arts, Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Some feel the building's minimalist box design is a triumph, others say it's an eyesore.

8 Scottish Parliament Building, Edinburgh: Stone, oak, and bamboo are part of the makeup of the Scottish Parliament, a building that is the subject of much debate.

9 Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham, England: One look and it's easy to see how this genre of architecture came to be known as the Brutalist style. Not surprisingly, the issue of its possible demolition has been looming for years.

10 Peter the Great Statue, Moscow: This 15 stories high monument was designed by controversial artist, Zurb K. Tsereteli, whose statue of Christopher Columbus was repeatedly rejected by the United States.

REUTERS/VIRTUALTOURIST.COM

Travel (and get paid to write about it, too)

TheTravelJunkie



Let setting around the world (and getting paid for it), the life of a travel writer is a glamorous one. Trying to get into this coveted and competitive career isn't easy, prompting many to ask: How do I break into the biz? I regularly get e-mails from readers asking for advice. While I do my best to share what I know, it's nice to get a second opinion.

Meet David Farley, a New York-based writer who teaches travel writing at New York University. He has been widely published and is the author of the soon-to-be-released travel book, *An Irreverent Curiosity: In Search of the Church's Strangest Relic in Italy's Oddest Town*, available next spring.

David shares his expertise on how you can break into the travel writing biz:

TAKE A TRAVEL WRITING COURSE offered by schools in your area.

READ BOOKS ABOUT THE WRITING CRAFT. Travel Writing by Don George and published by Lonely Planet is a great place to start.

READ ARTICLES WRITTEN BY CELEBRATED TRAVEL WRITERS. The best travel writing captures a sense of place. Tap into your five senses to bring the place alive, adding depth and vivid-



Travel writer David Farley in Calcata, Italy, where he worked on his upcoming book, *An Irreverent Curiosity*.

ness to your descriptions. Add quotes and historical/political context to situate the destination.

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOUR ARTICLE HAS AN "ANGLE," a unique take on the place. Editors want something that hasn't been done before. Up-and-coming neighborhoods, trends and unique destinations always make for a good angle.

THE DUTY OF A TRAVEL WRITER is to go one step beyond the realm of an average tourist. Like a reporter, you must talk to people, arrange interviews and get relevant quotes.

MOST TRAVEL EDITORS DON'T WANT TO READ PROPOSALS, they want to see the finished article, already written and polished. Find out the e-mail address of a newspaper's travel editor and send it in. If that editor wants the piece, they'll buy it from you.

PITCH YOUR WORK to local papers, magazines, newsletters and travel websites. Try to get published any-

where and everywhere. After you've got a few good clips, then you can start sending pitches to the bigger newspapers.

TRAVEL WRITERS DON'T MAKE MUCH MONEY. On assignment, it's nice hotels; at home, it's bare cupboards and ramen noodles. Few people can make a living solely from it. Either stick to your day job and write on the side, or become a full-time writer that focuses on travel, but also writes about other passions — food, art, health or pop culture.

SOME PEOPLE ARE NATURALLY GOOD WRITERS, but anyone can become a great writer with practice. Drive is most important. Get into the mindset that nothing is going to stop you from getting what you want. The most successful students I've taught weren't necessarily the most talented in the class; they were the most determined. Good luck and safe travels.

Julia Dimon is co-host of Word Travels, airing on OLN, and editor of thetraveljunkie.ca.



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\$139	\$215	\$215	\$239	\$249	\$265	\$269	\$439

International: Fares are EACH WAY from Ottawa and require ROUND-TRIP purchase. Departure dates as indicated below.

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14 travel

Forty per cent of U.S. business travellers expect to travel less often next year compared with 2008, as companies slash spending on hotels and airfares, an Ipsos survey has found. **REUTERS**

Top spots to ring in new year

ROMINA McGUINNESS
Metro World News

"So, what are your plans for New Year's Eve?" is probably among the questions we dread the most. As the most hyped-up night of the year, Dec. 31 is a bit like an insanely successful sibling — almost impossible to live up to.

Somehow, you always hear about some "friend of a friend" who hosts the most mind-blowing New Year's parties, whereas all you can remember from last year is the sound of your grandfather clock chiming 12.

The best solution is to go abroad. Whatever you do will be new and exciting — and just saying you jumped on a plane will make you sound exotic.

Guzzle some grapes in Madrid

Where to be at midnight: The central square of Puerta del Sol

Why: The Madrileños are known as Los Gatos, or cats, thanks to their love of a good party and ability to go without sleep. After a traditional family dinner, the New Year's celebra-

tions take off around the city's main square, the Puerta del Sol. The countdown is followed from the clock on the Casa de Correos building and the tradition is to eat 12 grapes, one on each chime of the clock. Toast 2009 with a glass of cava and throw some confetti in the air, to mark the real start of the party.

Dress code: The Spaniards believe that good luck comes to those who wear red underwear on the night, so build your outfit from there.

Next day cure: Chocolate con churros: Dip these crispy, deep-fried doughnuts into hot chocolate that's as thick as soil.

Sail the seas in Rio de Janeiro

Where to be at midnight: Copacabana Beach

Why: Be amongst the 2,500,000 people to celebrate the Véspera de Ano Novo by partaking in a ritual dedicated to the Goddess of the Sea, Deity Lemanja. An African tradition, people make little boats bearing the goddess' image, which are launched and left to float on the ocean. People also arrive



Hogmanay celebrations in Edinburgh, Scotland.

armed with gifts including white flowers, candles and champagne as an offering to the goddess. Stay on to witness the exuberant fireworks displays on show after the clock strikes 12.

Dress code: White bikini or swimming trunks.

Next day cure: If you're still there, take another dip in the ocean, then head for Café do Forte, a magnificent coffee stop with views stretching across Copacabana bay.

Bogmanay mania in Edinburgh

Where to be at midnight: Hogmanay Street Party, Princes Street

Why: The Hogmanay street party is one of the most traditional but liveliest ways to waltz into the New Year. Live music stages and a variety of comic acts form an irre-

sistible party on the last night of the year. Try book a ticket to the evening's Concert in the Garden starting at 9 p.m. on Princes Street. This year, Groove Armada and solo artist Paolo Nutini will rock your way into the New Year. Be sure to squeeze in the fireworks display and a glimpse at the eerie views of Edinburgh Castle by night.

Dress code: Tradition might forbid you from wearing anything under your kilt, but otherwise layer up. This is Scotland, and an open-air street party we're talking about.

Next day cure: Brunch at Montpeliers, located on the so-called Posh End of Bruntsfield Place. Collapse on the plush leather sofa seats and lazily watch the world go by whilst eating a warm courgette frittata.



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It's been a black year for China's tourism industry, hit by unseasonably cold weather last winter, by restrictions on travel to Lhasa and other Tibetan areas, and by the Olympics, when many Chinese stayed at home to watch the Games rather than travel. **REUTERS**

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DENIS BALBOUSE/REUTERS

An aircraft makes its final approach before landing at Geneva's Cointrin airport Monday. The International Air Transport Association says the industry is heading into its worst crisis in 50 years.

Airlines flying into dark economic skies

Global airlines are heading into their worst business crisis for 50 years with carriers facing possible collapse, revenues tumbling and hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk, the industry body The International Air Transport Association (IATA) said yesterday.

In a forecast for 2009, it said losses were expected to total \$2.5 billion US despite a boost from falling oil prices, with European airlines' deficits soaring tenfold over 2008 to \$1 billion US and Asia-Pacific's doubling to \$1.1 billion US.

"The outlook is bleak and the chronic industry crisis continues as we face the toughest revenue environment in 50 years," said Giovanni Bisignani, director-general of the organisation which groups some 230 international airlines.

IATA's chief economist, Brian Pearce, said the turbulence — largely due to the global financial crisis — was also likely to hit at aircraft manufacturers like Airbus and Boeing as orders were deferred or can-

"The outlook is bleak and the chronic industry crisis continues as we face the toughest revenue environment in 50 years."

Giovanni Bisignani

celled.

The forecast for 2009, based on an expected average oil price of \$60 US a barrel, was scaled down from the \$4.1 billion US IATA had foreseen in September when spot oil prices were around \$140 US and looked set to rise.

IATA also cut its estimate for losses this year to \$5 billion US from the \$5.2 billion US because of lower fuel costs.

But Pearce said European and Asia-Pacific carriers who had hedged their oil outlays by buying in advance would be bearing the heavier costs until well into 2009 and were unlikely to reap the full benefit of the drop until 2010.

U.S. airlines, by contrast, would make a small profit of some \$300 million US, just 1 per cent of their overall revenue, after massive losses of \$3.9 billion

US this year, largely because they had done little hedging and had cut flight capacity.

Bisignani, speaking at IATA's Geneva headquarters, said he saw "300,000 to 400,000 jobs at risk" among the some 32 million people around the world employed in air transport and related industries like travel, tourism and airports.

Labour had to understand "that jobs disappear when costs don't come down," he declared. "Unless airlines have the flexibility to cut costs," said Pearce, "they might not be around when the recession ends."

Bisignani said IATA carrier revenues in 2009 were likely to fall — from \$536 billion US this year to \$501 billion US — for the first time since just after the Sept. 11 attacks. **REUTERS**

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Producers honour Milk
The Producers Guild of America have honoured the movie Milk with its Stanley Kramer Award, for its portrayal of the first openly gay man elected to major public office in the U.S. The prize is handed out to movies that take on provocative social issues. [IMDB.COM](#)

Entertainment



Just a rumour
James Bond star Daniel Craig has brushed off rumours he is set to play the Norse god Thor in a movie adaptation of the Marvel comic book.
[IMDB.COM](#)

EDITOR: TINA COSTANZA, TINA.COSTANZA@METRONEWS.CA

Seeking redemption

ROBERT ABELE
for Metro Canada

Will Smith's status as the world's biggest movie star — whether as an earth defender (Independence Day), superhero (Hancock), or last man standing (I Am Legend) — doesn't make it any easier for the actor to handle love scenes.

In his newest film, the drama Seven Pounds, Smith's character — a haunted man seeking redemption — finds romantic solace one night in the arms of a cardiac patient played by Rosario Dawson. No such solace existed for Smith on the set for those moments.

"Will is shockingly shy about intimacy with strangers," says Dawson,

In brief

CRIME Actor Mark Ruffalo's brother has died a week after he was found at his Beverly Hills home with a gunshot wound to the head, police said yesterday. Scott Ruffalo, 39, a hair stylist, was taken off life support Monday. Ruffalo died hours after a woman was charged with attempted murder.

REUTERS

GlobalStyle



Kenya Hunt
Designer Goco is back, exclusively at metronews.ca/globalstyle

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Rick McGinnis
Read it at metronews.ca

who says her gregarious, hard-working co-star pushed the filming of their kissing scenes for weeks. When it came to that day's filming, she noticed Smith revving up for it by loudly proclaiming to himself, "Yeah, we're gonna GET this scene! Whooo! Yeah, I'm ready to go today!"

"I was like, 'You're kind of freakin' me out, like I need a little calm to go in to this, some candles and nice music, and you're

screaming like you're playing football or something,'" said Dawson.

Smith, whose wife of many years is actress Pinkett Smith, smiles good-naturedly in talking about his on-camera skit-tishness regarding sex.

He explains it by saying that he lives in fear that a woman cast opposite him in those moments will look at her famous married scene partner as an opportunistic groper.

"I need women to be comfortable around me, and doing a love scene with our clothes off just puts me in a defensive space," he said. "But it also hurts the acting if I'm in that space."

The idea, he said, is to get to a comfortable point, "Where a hand can brush up against her and it's not, 'Oh, excuse me.'"

At least his romantic interlude in Seven Pounds was a necessary one for a



Will Smith and Rosario Dawson star in Seven Pounds.

story whose message of renewal in the face of debilitating trauma has come to mean everything for its relentlessly positive and up-

beat star/producer. "He didn't know that what got broken could be repaired," Smith said of his character.

critics'corner

Criminal Minds

Once a cop, always a cop. And that mind-set might come in handy this week. A BAU case hits close to home for Morgan (Shemar Moore), who was a police officer before joining the team, when a serial killer specifically focuses on members of the police force in Phoenix, Ariz., in "Brothers in Arms." 9 PM on 13 CBS 7 CTV



Human Edge

He lived only 26 years and released only three albums, but the music of British folk-pop singer-songwriter Nick Drake, who died in 1974, has been attracting new attention in recent years, thanks in part to its use in a car commercial and the soundtrack of the film "Garden State." The documentary "A Skin Too Few: The Days of Nick Drake" revisits his life and work via interviews with his sister, actress Gabrielle Drake, and others. 10 PM on 2 TVO

OT	Vu	SC	C	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
12/10/08	265	353	2	TVO	Meerkat Manor	Meerkat Manor	The Agenda With Steve Paikin	New Tricks		Human Edge (N)		Agenda-Paikin
	211	331	3	GTV	ET Canada	Entertainment	Bones	Bones (HDTV PA)		The Guard (N)		News (N)
	-	-	5	SRC	Virginie (SC)	L'Épicerie	Le Match des étoiles (N) (SC)	M pour musique (HDTV) (SC)		Le Téléjournal (N) (SC)		La Zone
	209	342	6	CHRO	Instant Star	TMZ (N)	Pushing Daisies (N)	Private Practice (N)		(10:01) Dirty Sexy Money		News (N)
	196	311	7	CTV	Hollywood	etalk	Law & Order "Sweetie"	Criminal Minds (N)		CSI: NY "The Triangle"		News (N)
	208	303	8	CBC	Coronation St.	Jeopardy! (N)	The Santa Clause *** (1994, Comedy) Tim Allen.	CBC News: The National		CBC News: The National		The Hour
	-	360	9	NBC	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Little Spirit: Christmas	Life "Canyon Flowers"		Law & Order "Sweetie"		News (N)
	117	713	10	TVA	Km/h (SC)	Poule-oeufs or	Maman Last Call (2005, Com. dramatique) Sophie Lorain.			TVA 22 heures	(10:45) Nicola Ciccone	
	-	-	11	QS	Le Plus beau jour de l'année (2005, Com. dramatique)		Pushing Daisies (SC)			Cent dix pour cent (SC)		Mr Showbiz
	137	763	12	TFO	Panorama		Les Citadins du rebut global	L'Odeur de la papaye verte *** (1993, Drame)				Enfants
	-	362	13	CBS	Dr. Phil (HDTV) (N)		Old Christine	Gary Unmarr		Criminal Minds (N)		Two/Half Men
news	216	395	14	OMN2	Cold Case "Start-Up"		News (N)	News (N)		Two/Half Men	King	Cold Case
	214	344	15	CITY	Law & Order: SVU		Little Spirit: Christmas	Stylista (N)		I Love Money		News (N)
	115	343	16	CFMT	Two/Half Men	The Simpsons	News (N)	Vivere II	News (N)	The Simpsons	King of the Hill	Metropia
	218	345	18	E!	The Insider (N)	E! News	Bones (HDTV PA)	E! News Celebrity news.		True Hollywood Story		News (N)
	-	361	20	ABC	News (N)	Entertainment	Pushing Daisies (N)	Private Practice (N)		(10:01) Dirty Sexy Money		News (N)
	512	396	24	CPAC	La Période de questions		Heure polit.	L'Heure politique			Revue	Période-quest.
	651	355	25	CTS	Happy Days	Laverne	Michael Coren Show	100 Huntley Street		Life Today	This Is Day	John Hagee
	-	365	36	FOX	TMZ (N)	Seinfeld	Secret Millionaire (N)	Bones (HDTV PA)		News (N)		News
	-	-	64	PBS	Business Rpt.	Whiz Quiz	Winter Warmth: Crane	P.O.V. "Inheritance" (HDTV) (N)			Windsors-Royal	
	205	312	104	CTV	Hollywood	etalk	Law & Order "Sweetie"	Criminal Minds (N)		CSI: NY "The Triangle"		News (N)
	502	390	26	NW	CBC News	Newman	The Hour	CBC News: The National		Extreme Speed		National
	500	500	33	CNN	Lou Dobbs Tonight		Campbell Brown: No Bias	Larry King Live		Anderson Cooper 360 (HDTV)		
sports	406	417	27	net	World Combat League		The Ultimate Fighter	Best Damn Sports Show		Sportsnet Connected		Hockey Central
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	400	280	30	TSN	That's Hockey!	NHL Hockey	Calgary Flames at Detroit Red Wings. (HDTV) (Live)			SportsCentre (HDTV) (Live)		
	410	403	52	SCR	NBA Basketball	Indiana Pacers at Toronto Raptors. (HDTV) (Live)						
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cable variety	521	560	34	TLC	Jon & Kate	Jon & Kate	Jon & Kate	Jon & Kate	Jon & Kate Plus 8	Solved Ophthalmologist.		Jon & Kate
	145	761	35	TV5	Toute une histoire		Ca se soigne (2008, Drame) Thierry Lhermitte.	Les Filles,		Partir	Facteur	Journal TV5
	616	521	39	SHO	Kink in Hair	Kink in Hair	Durham County	Billable Hours	G-Spot	The Starter Wife		House
	620	523	40	BVO	Desperate Housewives		Berkeley	Bravo!Videos	Wingfield	Letters	Arts & Minds	The Achievers
	520	505	42	DIS	Daily Planet (N)		Cash Cab	Destroyed	Monster Moves	Mayday		Daily Planet
	575	583	43	CMT	Cheerleaders	Cheerleaders	Home Improve.	Home Improve.	Reba	Reba	Hope & Faith	Hope & Faith
	601	562	45	SLC	Til Debt-Part	Rich Poor	X-Weighted "Gaia"		Real Housewives of OC	Filthy Rich: Cattle Drive (N)		ET Canada
	625	548	46	COM	Air Farce	Just for Laughs		Corner Gas	The Simpsons	South Park	House Party	RENO 911!
	294	529	47	TBS	House-Payne	House-Payne	Conspiracy Theory ** (1997, Suspense) Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts.				Seinfeld	Family Guy
	600	564	49	H&G	House Hunters	Property Virgin	Mansions	The Stagers	Property Virgin	Unsellable	Million Dollar Listing	Holmes-Homes
	627	528	50	SPC	Lost "I Do"		Star Trek: Deep Space Nine	Battlestar Galactica			Ghost Hunters International (N)	Stargate SG-1
	581	566	53	MTV	Busted	After	MTV News	Cribs	Super Sweet	The Hills	Dance Life	Dance Life
family	618	524	54	TROP	Beverly Hills, 90210		Reality	What Happen?	Family Guy	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	'70s Show
	522	506	55	HIS	NCIS "Switch"		Cities of the Underworld	Captain Cook: Obsession		NCIS "Switch"		Crime Stories
	129	773	60	CD	Biographies (HDTV)		Le Pouvoir caché (HDTV)	Université	Paranormales	Affaires classées (HDTV)		C'est incroy
	261	394	61	V	Murder, She Wrote		Summer Wine	Dinnerladies	Secret Santa ** (2003, Drama) Jennie Garth, Steve Eckholdt.			Doc
	602	567	62	W	Will & Grace	Friends	Grocery Bag	Maxed Out	Supersize vs. Superskinny	She's Got the Look		Style by Jury
	269	350	70	APTN	Canadian Geographic		Copper Thunderbird		APTN National News: Contact	Tribal Treks	Guides	Wings-Canada
	621	527	71	TLK	The Ellen DeGeneres Show		TMZ (N)	etalk	Scoring With the Stars	The Tonight Show-Jay Leno		TMZ
	603	561	95	FN	The Main	Chef at Home	Restaurant Makeover	Iron Chef America		Top Chef		Dinner Imposs.



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Holloway is going to be a dad
Lost star Josh Holloway is going to be a daddy. The actor and his wife, Jessica, are expecting their first child, due next year. **PEOPLE.COM**

Celebrity Buzz

Friends rely on Smith for advice

MARRIAGE Actor Will Smith is under pressure from his famous friends to make his marriage to wife Jada Pinkett Smith work because they're constantly coming to him for relationship advice, **imdb.com** reports.

The tight-knit couple are preparing to celebrate their 11th year of married life on Dec. 31. But Smith's famous pals have "terrified" him by marking their union as the golden standard in Hollywood.

"I was with (rapper) Redman the other day (and) he said, 'Man, listen. I've got this relationship that I'm trying to make work, but I'm telling you, if you and Jada don't work, I'm done,'" Smith tells **People.com**. "That so terrifies me that there are people's lives that I can affect like that just with little stuff, not even having to do anything big. So I don't want to break that ... I might mess something up, and that sorta keeps me in a

place where I'm really focused and paying attention, and I just don't want to step wrongly."

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Knight asks to leave hit show, report says

CAREER Grey's Anatomy star T.R. Knight, who has played George O'Malley since the show's debut, has asked producers to write him off the hit medical drama, **People.com** reports.

While details of his exit have yet to be ironed out, a source close to the situation says it seems likely Knight's request will be granted and he will be released from his contract.

Recent reports that Knight has not been attending table-reads for upcoming episodes or that he had walked off the set and cleaned

out his dressing room are inaccurate, a rep for Knight tells **People**.

"He has been there every day. He was at a table read yesterday. He hasn't said goodbye to anyone." The rep had no further comment on his possible exit.

So why does Knight want to leave?

"Have you seen the show lately?" says the source. Knight has received little screen time this season. "It's time to move on," says the source. "It just feels like this is the right time to go." ABC had no comment.



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Anderson outfit shocks crowd

PEOPLE Pamela Anderson stunned onlookers when she arrived at a prestigious art fair wearing just a T-shirt and underwear, **femalefirst.co.uk** reports.

The actress seemed unaware of the controversy she was causing at the Art Basel Miami Beach fair, and later posed for photographs while bending over paintings with her bum in the air.

"It was unbelievable. Her outfit was more suited to a party at the Playboy mansion than an important art event," an onlooker said.

Anderson also wore patent pink shoes and a Warhol-style Campbell's Soup clutch handbag.



METRO NEWS SERVICES

Smith defends her TV bosses

CAREER Actress Brooke Smith has defended her former TV bosses at Grey's Anatomy, insisting she has "no hard feelings" after her gay character was written out of the show, **imdb.com** reports.

Network bosses announced Smith would be axed from the show last month, sparking rumours she was written out of the series in a bid to end her character Dr. Erica Hahn's burgeoning lesbian affair.

Grey's creator Shonda Rhimes refuted the reports, telling **Us Weekly**, "Brooke Smith was obviously not fired for playing a lesbian."



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Clearly it's not an issue as we have a lesbian character on the show — Calliope Torres (Sara Ramirez). Unfortunately, we did not find that the magic and chemistry with Brooke's character would sustain in the long run."

Actor Isaiah Washington, who was let go from the show last year, lashed out at his former bosses, calling their decision to cut Smith "disgusting."

But Smith has defended Rhimes, adding, "It's an end of a chapter. It was a good experience. I'd played gay characters before and I don't think that's going to end. There's no hard feelings."

I weigh 200: Winfrey

HEALTH In January's **O** magazine, Oprah Winfrey confesses that she now weighs 200 pounds and has "fallen off the wagon," **us-magazine.com** reports.

"I'm mad at myself," writes Winfrey. "I'm embarrassed. I can't believe that after all these years, all the things I know how to do, I'm still talking about my weight. I look



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at my thinner self and think, 'How did I let this happen again?'"

In the article, Winfrey says she has struggled with an out-of-balance thyroid and the condition made her develop "a fear of working out."

She confessed that she's packed on 40 pounds since 2006, when she weighed 160.

Lohan to write of split

RUMOUR Lindsay Lohan is begging the paparazzi to stop asking her if she's split from girlfriend Samantha Ronson, assuring fans she'd post the news on her blog if they ever broke up, **imdb.com** reports.

Rumours have swirled about the popular couple's relationship status since they began dating

earlier this year.

They have repeatedly denied splitting, and Lohan has once again taken to her MySpace.com blog to "prove all the liars wrong" less than a week after slamming previous breakup reports.



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Twain may be dating again

RELATIONSHIPS Singer Shania Twain has sparked reports she's dating the husband of the woman her ex is alleged to have had an affair with after the mystery man was spotted escorting Twain around New York recently, **femalefirst.co.uk** reports.

Twain split from her husband Robert (Mutt) Lang in May, following his revelation that he was romancing the couple's longtime secretary, Marie-Anne

Thiebaud, who was the manager of their Swiss estate.

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Jolie spends less on Pitt

PEOPLE It appears even stars are being affected by the recession.

In Touch has learned that Angelina Jolie's 45th birthday present to Brad Pitt will be another motorcycle. But this year's base price on the new Ducati is \$12,000 US — much less compared to last year's gift that cost a reported \$100,000.

Still, Jolie knows what Pitt likes, intouch-weekly.com reports.

"Since Angie is always in a dilemma of what to buy Brad, she's getting him the new Ducati Monster 1100S titanium," an insider tells In Touch.

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J.J. SAID
IT WOULD!



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